

## Remarks to Africa Symposium

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Good afternoon.

On behalf of the United States government, and as Chair of this Third WTO Ministerial Conference, let me welcome all of you to Seattle, and to this Symposium for African delegations. As we begin, I would like to say a few words about our own African trade policies and our opportunities to work together in the Round.

This can be summed up in the opening of President Clinton's address to the South African Parliament two years ago. For many years, as the President said, we asked questions like:

"what can we do for Africa? Or, whatever can we do about Africa? Those were the wrong questions. The right question today is, what can we do with Africa?"

### COMMON INTERESTS

Each member of our foreign policy and economic team acts in this spirit. In trade policy, over the past two years we have listened to African ideas and concerns -- at the last WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva; in the historic US-Africa Ministerial many of you attended in March; and in my own discussions with leaders and Ministers from Ghana, South Africa, Mozambique, Senegal, Nigeria and many other nations. And the conclusions we drew were as follows:

-- Africa's prospects are good. African economic and political reforms over this decade have brought results: since 1994, inflation is down, growth is up, and our trade with Africa -- both exports and imports -- has grown.

-- Africans appear to have a policy consensus on trade which we can support, and which will promote further reform and growth. This includes support for regional economic integration; technical assistance as African governments make commitments in complex areas like services, agricultural standards and intellectual property; and market access in areas of comparative advantage for Africa like textiles and agriculture.

-- And the WTO can help us reach these goals together. It can help African governments create more competitive economies, by making commitments to open markets for goods. It can

help African nations attract investment and rapidly improve their technological base, as Ghana and Uganda have done by joining the WTO agreements on Financial Services and Basic Telecommunications. And by further opening world markets to African products in the new Round, it can help promote growth and employment.

## AFRICAN TRADE POLICIES

Our own American policy initiatives will contribute to these goals.

Beginning in 1997, we have expanded our duty-free GSP program to include nearly 2000 new products, and devoted more people and resources to developing trade with Africa. This has helped Africa raise its non-energy exports to the U.S. by nearly \$1 billion, including an increase of over 50% in African textile exports. We have also launched the Leland Initiative, a five-year, \$15 million U.S. government effort to extend full Internet connectivity to over 20 African countries.

And this will go much further. We have won broad Congressional support for the African Opportunity and Growth Act, which will extend a range of duty-free privileges for ten years to reforming African countries, and ensure that quotas do not restrict African textile exports.

And to this we have added President Clinton's historic proposal to forgive 100% of the debt owed by least-developed countries, when relief will help finance basic human needs.

## THE WTO AGENDA

At the same time, we have worked with our African trade partners to ensure that the new Round, and the general work of the WTO, will meet Africa's priorities.

First, we are working toward an agenda that opens world markets more fully to African products. In the new Round, both developed and the more advanced developing countries should commit to remove tariffs on products from the least-developed countries. We are also pushing for reforms of agricultural trade, including both removal of trade barriers and the elimination of export subsidies, that open new opportunities and strengthen guarantees of fairness for African farmers.

Second, we are also ensuring that while the negotiating agenda for the new Round meets the top priorities of all participants, it is also focused and manageable enough so that all WTO members can fully participate.

And third, we have developed, jointly with Lesotho, Nigeria, Senegal and Zambia, a proposal to the WTO's General Council on the exceptionally important topic this Symposium will address: strengthening and improving the WTO's technical assistance and capacity-building functions. This will help ensure that all African participants in the WTO can take the practical, day-to-day steps that yield the system's benefits:

- Participation in all WTO agreements, notably those dealing with complex issues like regulation of services, protection of intellectual property, and development of strong sanitary and phytosanitary standards for agriculture. These are the agreements which help countries reach foreign markets and attract investment.
- Use of the dispute settlement mechanism, so that African countries are fully able to assert their rights.
- And participation in formation of the trading system's agenda for the future.

## CONCLUSION

At that, of course, is already happening – as, at this Ministerial Conference, we see the remarkable contribution Africa is making to the development of the trading system of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In Chairman Mchumo's direction of the General Council over the course of this year; at the NGO Forum on Monday, where we heard from African business leaders, labor union heads and environmentalists; in this Symposium today, Africa is taking its rightful place as a shaper of the future world economy. I am very proud that we are, in the President's words, working with Africa to make it happen.

## INTRODUCTION, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THE OAU

With us today, to also welcome you to this symposium and to Seattle are Senator William Roth and Congressman Jim McDermott, as well Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity/African Economic Unity Ambassador Vijay Makhan.

These members of Congress have been champions of African interests and have been vital in our combined efforts to achieve passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. As Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Roth led the way for passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which passed by an overwhelming margin. Congressman McDermott was a leader in the House on the bill as well.

Both members are critical to the formation of American trade policy, especially with respect to Africa. They are committed to American leadership in maintaining an open trading system that promotes the development of all countries.

These Members of Congress demonstrate that when it comes to doing what is best for America and the world, our political system can work.

Mayor Wellington Webb is also here to welcome you. In addition to being Mayor of Denver, Colorado, Mayor Webb is also President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. He has been

a leader in working to promote closer U.S.-Africa ties and enhanced relations between American and African private as well as public sectors.

Lastly, I want to express my appreciation for Ambassador Vijay Makhan's participation in this symposium. I had the pleasure of co-chairing with Ambassador Makhan a special U.S.-Africa roundtable on bilateral and multilateral trade issues during the U.S.-Africa Ministerial in March.

I am very pleased these distinguished Members of Congress, Mayor Webb, and Ambassador Makhan could be here today. I ask you now to join me in a warm welcome for the Honorable Senator William Roth.